

Washington, DC — Since mid-2003, the Sudanese government has employed armed local Arab militias, the Janjaweed, to carry out a counterinsurgency on its behalf. The militias have rampaged throughout Darfur, burning hundreds of villages, raping women and summarily executing African villagers, according to numerous human rights reports. More than 200,000 people have died in Darfur since the crisis erupted, according to UN estimates. Some estimates place the figure as high as 450,000.

— Today, Congressman Joe Sestak (D-PA) voted in favor of two resolutions calling for ending sexual violence against women and girls in Darfur and Central Africa (H. Res. 726), and condemning the September attacks on African Union peacekeepers in Darfur, Sudan (H. Res. 740). These latest resolutions are among a string of resolutions and bills that Congressman Sestak has supported to raise awareness and advocate for a peaceful solution to the genocide.

“As a strong human rights advocate, I believe that Congress must support the victims of these horrendous atrocities and crimes against humanity,” stated Joe. “These most recent heinous acts illustrates why the international community must do more to the end the violence in Darfur.”

H. Res. 726 calls on the Bush Administration to improve assistance to victims and potential victims of rape and sexual violence in Darfur, eastern Chad, and the Central African Republic. This resolution also calls on the international community, such as the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and the European Union, to provide sufficient resources and training for the protection of women and girls displaced in refugee camps throughout the region.

H. Res. 740 condemns rebel attacks that occurred in Darfur on September 29, which led to the death of 10 AU peacekeepers. This resolution pushes for assistance to the governments and families of those killed, wounded, or missing during the attack.

Congressman Sestak has been a strong advocate for policies to address the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. He voted in favor of H.Con.Res. 7, to urge the League of Arab States and each Member State individually to acknowledge the genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan and to step up their efforts to stop the genocide in Darfur, and was also a co-sponsor of H. Res. 422, which urges the Government of the People's Republic of China to use its influence and economic leverage to stop genocide and violence.

Congressman Sestak is also a co-sponsor and voted in favor of H.R. 180, the Darfur Accountability and Divestment Act of 2007. This bill would ensure the publication of a list of all persons who have a direct investment in or are conducting business operations in Sudan's power production, mineral extraction, oil-related, or military equipment industries. In addition, it sets forth excluded business operations, including operations with the regional government of southern Sudan; marginalized populations of Sudan; and peacekeeping or humanitarian organizations. Additionally, this legislation process divests funds from, or restricts investments in, companies that conduct business operations in Sudan. Finally, this bill seeks other governments to adopt similar measures to publicize the activities of persons and entities whose financial dealings enable the Sudanese Government to commit genocide against people of the Darfur region, and to authorize divestment and prevent further investment.

He is also strong supporter of H.R. 2489, the Genocide Accountability Act, which would prosecute acts of genocide committed by an alleged offender who is a permanent residence in the United States, even if the offense occurred outside the United States.

“As a nation, one of our primary goals should be to appropriately remedy past wrongs and to work to ensure that such terrible chapters in world history, such as the Holocaust, the Srebrenica massacres, and the Rwandan genocide are not repeated. Unfortunately, the atrocities in Darfur remind us that history does repeat itself and that we must do more to save the lives of the innocent and the disenfranchised,” said Congressman Sestak.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "DeepBlue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.